

Montana Food Bank Network

Inside Hunger in Montana

Factoids:

Average Income vs. Expenses for Montana

Families in Poverty

Poverty Level Income for Family of 4 = \$1,838mo.

- Less Average Montana Rent for a Family of 4 = \$694/mo.
- Less Average Montana Childcare for 2 children = \$800/mo.
- Less Average Food Costs for a Family of 4 = \$700
- Plus Average SNAP Benefits for a Family of 4 = \$469
- Monthly Income Remaining for utilities, transportation, healthcare and other expenses = \$113/mo

14.4% of people are at 100% of poverty or below—around **130,000 people**

Child poverty level: **17%**

Food Insecurity: **9.9%**, Hunger **4.3%**

Poverty levels for female headed families with children <18 – **41.6%**

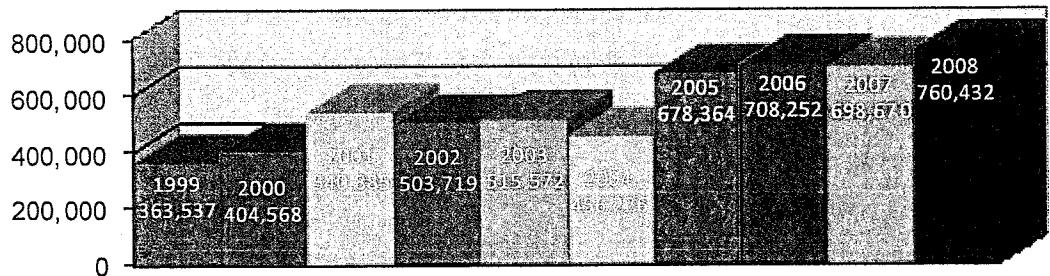
MT is ranked 11th in the nation for the most people working 2 or more jobs

80% of Montana jobs do not pay a “living wage” (\$17/hour family of 3)

*Many of the statistics listed in this report were taken from the Montana Food Bank Network Food Security Council's 2006 & 2008 hunger survey report: Hungry in Montana.

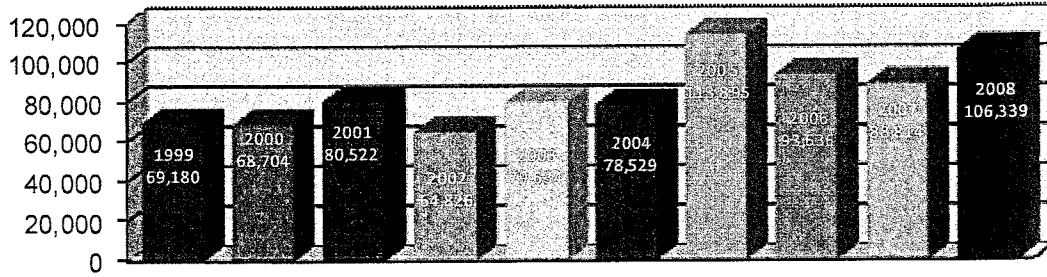
HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY: A CONTINUING PROBLEM IN MONTANA

**10-Year Comparison of Total Client Visits
1999-2008**



Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be an end in sight for the demand for emergency food in Montana. With the rising cost of housing, fuel and food, household incomes are eroding even further. Job losses have added to the increased need for emergency food. The following two charts display this growth. The above Chart compares the total number of client visits to emergency food programs served by the Montana Food Bank Network over a 10-year period from 1999 through 2008. This number includes the repeat client visits each year. By measuring the total number of visits a client makes to an emergency feeding program, we can better determine the amount of food needed in the emergency food system. Overall, the growth in the emergency food system

10-Year Comparison of Clients Visiting for the First Time Each Year



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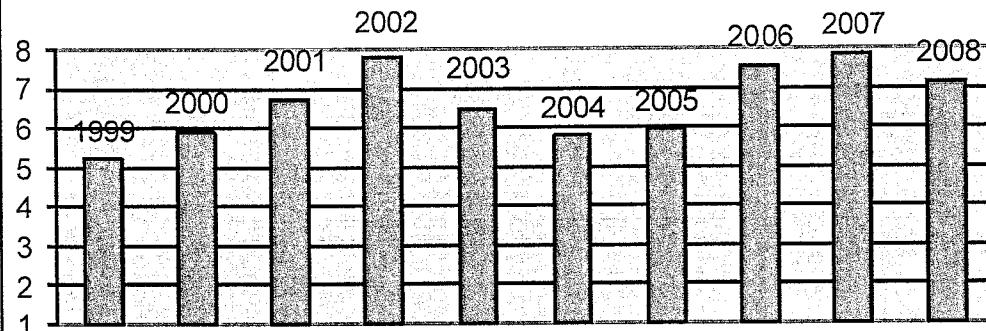
Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope!

2008 Study of 342 clients – 935 individuals at 7 food pantries in Montana showed:

- More middle class, newly poor clients are in need of emergency food.
- 80% had come for food more than once in the year.
- 48% had gone without food or skipped meals.
- 13% of children skipped meals
- 60% had come to the food bank for multiple years.
- 47% of the clients also receiving SNAP
- 42% of HH had one or more children <18
- Poverty levels: 65% in rural sites to 74% on reservations.
- 21% of HHs living below 50% of the poverty level.
- 46% of HH employed - at least 1 adult working.
- 13% of primary wage earners – more than one job.
- Education or employment did not lift families out of poverty.
- Choosing between food or necessities.
- 63% - between food and fuel.
- 54% - between food and utilities.
- 50% - between food and mortgage or rent.
- 44% - between food and medical care or Rx.

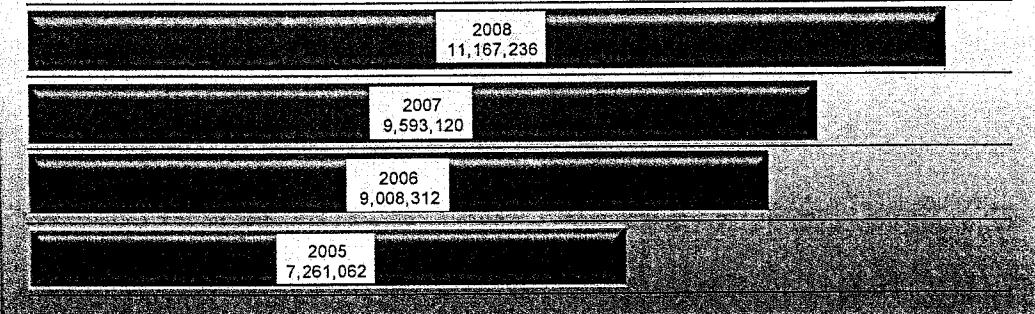
As food prices continue to rise, more people are accessing federal food programs such as: food stamps, WIC and CSFP (senior commodities). However, those continuing to access the emergency food system have become more dependent on that system for food. Many people are under the mistaken impression that the most critical time for food assistance is during the holiday season. Although the holidays are a busy time for the emergency food system, summertime is also a critical need time for local agencies distributing food in their community. Children are out of school, not accessing the school breakfast and lunch programs. As fuel, housing and food prices increase, more families depend upon their local emergency food provider for support. The Montana Food Bank Network conducts a hunger survey through its agencies every two years. The information on the left panel provides some results of the 2006 Hunger Survey.

Average Number of Repeat Visits Per Client 1999-2008



The Chart above shows the trend in repeat visits over a 10-year period. In 2007 clients returned for food support an average of 8 times. Clients requiring continued emergency food assistance spiked in 2006 and remains constant as fuel costs, food and housing costs are on the rise. This increase in repeat visits is an indication of the chronic need developing in the emergency food system. With mortgage requirements tightening, there is greater demand for rental property causing increases in housing costs. Fuel and food prices are also on the rise leaving many households in a dire financial condition. Adding to the situation are the job losses that spiked in 2008.

Pounds of Food Distributed Through Montana's Emergency Food System 2005-2008



The above graph shows the increase in the amount of food distributed through the emergency food system over a 4-year period. There was a 65% increase in food distributed between 2005 and 2008.

How can we change this picture to reflect a food system that allows all Montanans to access their food in a socially acceptable manner without having to use emergency food? The best way to help is by getting involved in and supporting the change. We must have the ability to feed those in need, while working to change policy and practices that keep people food insecure and hungry. For more information on how you can get involved in solving this problem, contact the Montana Food Bank Network at 1-800-809-4752 or log on to www.mfbn.org

HUNGRY IN MONTANA

Factors Contributing to Emergency Food Needs

And the Impact of Hunger



"You have your future all planned out, think it's going to go a certain way, and then it doesn't."



"This summer I've had to choose between a gallon of gas or a gallon of milk."

"The kids think we are camping, but we've been homeless in our camper for a month."

"Last month I had to go without my daily medications for a week and a half due to lack of money."

Hunger is significantly affected by the complex issues and acute real-life situations that food pantry clients face. These situations have a compounding effect on poverty and complicate the reasons for hunger.

Economic stress on a national level has created new challenges for both Montanans living in poverty and for some newly affected by poor economic conditions.

WHAT LOCAL COMMUNITIES CAN DO

Alex Dupree
Flathead Food Bank
Kalispell, MT

* Support start-up and expansion of community gardens for low-income populations.

* Support efforts to increase participation in school food programs, SNAP and the WIC program.

* Strengthen charitable food distribution through local and faith-based agencies.

"Low income workers and families are especially vulnerable to the challenge of a weak economy. The consequences of this include hunger, malnutrition and higher risk of illness."

Jayanti Battacharya, *Heat or Eat, American Journal of Public Health*

Strategies to Reduce Hunger and Improve Nutrition for Montana Families

WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO

- * Strengthen the national nutrition safety net
- * Provide improved funding and streamline administrative rules of all Child Nutrition programs.
- * Ensure that benefits and eligibility rules for SNAP and commodities programs are commensurate with current economic situations.
- * Reduce administrative burdens within these programs.



"We are simply not able to keep up with the sheer volume of calls coming in, from people who have never needed our services before. The demographic is changing. If you look in our waiting room you will see professionally dressed people, people who never thought they'd need our services, asking how the program works and if they can get a food box."

ECONOMIC COST OF HUNGER IN THE US *

- Overall the 2008 "Hungry in Montana" study showed that a combined effort to improve family economic security, increase participation in public food programs and increase access to healthy foods are the most effective ways to assure food security for hungry Montanans.
- The demand for emergency food has been increasing at food pantries and feeding sites that are served by the Montana Food Bank Network. The 2008 year has seen the most significant increase in client food needs, largely due to soaring costs of food and fuel. Food banks and pantries are seeing more middle class clients that are newly poor and in need of emergency food.

HUNGER - IMPACT ON HEALTH

- Increased infant mortality
- Iron-deficiency anemia in infants
- Poor academic achievement in schools
- Missed school days due to illness
- High risk pregnancies - poor outcomes
- Cheaper food choices - leading to obesity
- Malnutrition and chronic disease in elderly
- These costs do not include the cost of charitable giving
- The economic cost of hunger impacts states, communities and the nation. It is often overlooked by those who are not hungry.
- Medical, mental and psychosocial problems: \$66 billion
- Lower education level, lower productivity: \$9.2 billion
- The economic cost of hunger is greater than the costs due to alcohol, abuse, smoking, obesity and drug abuse.

* The Economic Cost of Domestic Hunger, Dr. Larry Brown, Harvard School of Public Health. 2007.

The Food Security Council

Montana Food Bank Network

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How Prevalent is Hunger in Montana?

The inability to access adequate and healthy food has become a part of the daily lives of people of all ages who have limited incomes. The Montana Food Bank Network (MFBN) has seen a record number of clients in need of emergency in the past year. Food pantries across the state are seeing an average of a 30% increase and are struggling to be able to provide adequate food to clients.



2. POVERTY

- Poverty levels of food bank clients in this study ranged from 74% on the reservations to 66 and 67% in urban and rural areas respectively.

Who Are the Hungry?

People with limited incomes who face a sudden change in the family's economic situation.

- Job loss, no savings to fall back on.
- Serious illness of a child or adult, death in the family.
- Inability to pay rent, resulting in eviction.

Food Insecurity

exists when the availability of nutritious food is uncertain or limited. Adults commonly skip meals.

At a Glance – Causes of Hunger?

Hunger is an Income Issue. Client incomes continue to have a direct bearing on their ability to purchase food.

1. PERSONAL OR FAMILY ECONOMICS

Low wages among working people is a major factor in lack of access to food.

- Seniors and those who are disabled and living on fixed incomes could not meet all expenses.
- Rise in food and fuel prices created further challenges.
- Essential needs like rent, fuel, child care, heating and medical bills are paid first, leaving little money to purchase food.

Hunger is the condition where both adults and children cannot access food consistently and have to reduce food intake, eat poor diets and often go without any food. Hunger is also defined as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food.

3. MAKING HARD CHOICES

- Between 44 to 63% of clients indicated they had to make difficult choices between paying for food or paying for fuel, housing, utilities, or medications.

4. PUBLIC FOOD ASSISTANCE

- Federal Poverty Levels are used to determine eligibility for public food assistance programs, but poverty measures are outdated and do not reflect the true economic status of the poor.
- Many of the poor who need public food assistance are not eligible to apply.
- Many of the Montanans who are eligible for public food programs are not participating in them – for various reasons.

Trying to Survive, Coping with Hunger

1. SKIPPING MEALS

- Adults skipped meals so the rest of the family could eat, especially children.
- With extreme hunger, children also skipped meals.

2. EATING FOOD WITH LESS NUTRITION

- Hungry people chose foods that cost less, have less nutrition, more calories and use of fast food.
- Stress of daily life, holding down a job, taking care of children lead to greater problems.
- There is little money and no access to buy locally grown fruits and vegetables.
- Older people could not follow special diet needs and created greater health problems.

"The most difficult challenge is trying to provide for our children with such low income while still trying to teach them that this is not what life is all about... It is hard to see the disappointment in my kids."

Food Pantry Client

3. INCREASING REQUESTS FOR EMERGENCY FOOD

- People came between 10-12 times a year to urban and rural food banks, and between 1-3 times a year on reservation sites.
- In urban, rural and reservation area, approximately 70% of people had come for food over several years.

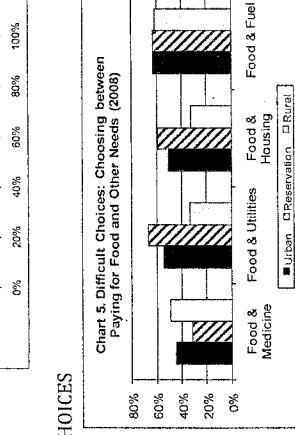
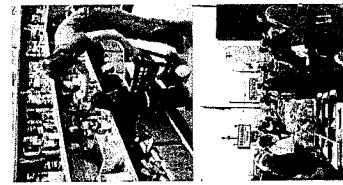
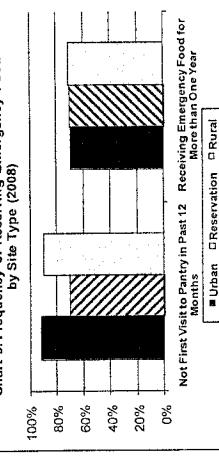
Real People, Real Lives -- the Challenge of Being Poor and Hungry

Food bank clients experienced diverse and complicated issues that lead to struggles in daily life and the difficulty of trying to feed their families. They expressed the frustration of not being able to provide healthy foods or meet the family's nutritional needs, while dealing with numerous other problems in their lives. Some of the challenges faced were:

- BIGGER MONTHLY BILLS, UNEXPECTED BILLS:** Higher rent and heating bills, sick child, prescription costs, car repairs, home heater breaking down.
- HEALTH PROBLEMS:** Sudden illness of child and no child care, chronic problems in the family - like diabetes and heart disease that need special medication and diet, extra medical bills.
- DISRUPTION IN FAMILY LIFE:** Divorce or death in the family, single women taking care of children alone.
- TRYING TO FIND A JOB THAT PAID LIVING WAGES:** Being laid off, having reduced hours of work, seasonal work that didn't last, looking daily for a better job.

Despite these barriers, the people at food banks dealt with their problems with tenacity and the hope that their situation would turn around.

Chart 4. Households Below 2008 Federal Poverty Guidelines



Food Insecurity is

the inability to access food in a consistent manner, independent of emergency food assistance.

Economic Factors Impacting Food Budgets (2008)

